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What Is a "Psychology of Religion"? A Review of *Religion and Human Behavior* by W. N. Schoenfeld

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Who can be calm when he is called upon to prove the existence of the gods? (Plato)

The author, an eminent behavioral psychologist, obtained his PhD at Columbia, where he served on the faculty from 1942 to 1966, and established, with Fred S. Keller, a laboratory in the experimental analysis of behavior. Schoenfeld and Keller also authored *Principles of Psychology: a Systematic Text in the Science of Behavior* (1950). At Queens College in New York, he directed the Program in Conditioning until his retirement in 1983. He has been president of the Eastern Psychological Association, the Pavlovian Society, and Division 25 (Experimental Analysis of Behavior) of the American Psychological Association.

Three prefaces tell of this book's long history. It began as a set of notes in 1967, was expanded through a burst of writing in 1971, and was used in course offerings at Queens College. The prefaces also describe the author's evolving feelings as a Jew and as a scientist, which brought this work into the world. The book also contains many references, among them Buber, Donne, Emerson, Freud, Hume, James, Jung, Levy-Bruhl, Mach, Maimonides, Piaget, Santayana, Schoenfeld, Shaw, Skinner, St. Paul, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Whitehead.

Many who know Schoenfeld's best-known writings may not know some of the works here referred to: a 1965 chapter on learning theory and social psychology, a paper entitled "Humanism and the Science of Behavior" (1969), and a 1969 article on the Objective Psychology of J. R. Kantor. Thus does an approach via the externals prepare the reader for the further surprises that await within.

A riffle through the 193 pages reveals no "graphics": no conditioning paradigms, no theosophical diagrams of astral bodies, no stages of cosmic evolution, no portrayal of levels of reality. No vibrations of rays creating the universe. Nothing of three-in-one, or of one-in-three. No map of the wanderings of tribes, no diagrams of the branching of the family tree of world religions, and no time lines of epochs. No graven images; indeed, no images at all. There is only English prose in well-printed paragraphs. A book to be read. From beginning to end.

The table of contents exhibits the main topical headings of the book: God, Miracle and Science, Death and Immortality, Sin and Evil, Prayer and Ritual, and Belief and Heresy.

The introductory first chapter stresses the universality of religion in human society. Schoenfeld points out that religion, although ubiquitous, is nonetheless not regarded, along with such other universals as sport and games, art and dance, "without surprise," with its continuation taken for granted. He surfaces early and questions sharply the assumption, widely shared in the social sciences, that an "explanation" of religion must perforce explain it away; as if its very basis would crumble under a clear light. Also scrutinized and dissected is the view, characteristic of Enlightenment secular rationalism, that if the "dead hand of tradition" could be but silenced, excised from our common learning, then religious belief would collapse, not to arise again. Not so, says Schoenfeld: Religion arises, and rearises, from the operation of the contingencies of every human life, and is an inevitable aspect of the behavior of the human organism.

The burden of the book, then, lies in the manner of addressing four questions:

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1. What are the contingencies and what is human nature such that religion is a result in every human society?

2. To what degree is this result, apart from its self-generative quality, truly inevitable? Says Schoenfeld: "Where the bone of a saint cannot be shown to the public as a religious relic, Lenin's whole body is on display" (p. 5). (True. But can there be no world in which neither saint nor hero is mummified? Is this impossible?)

3. If religion is inevitable, is this fact intrinsically good or bad for the human groups in which it is observed? Although regimes (such as Communism) that suppress religions in the name of rational secularism have failed, how can we rejoice who notice that the revival of religious activity seems to bring in its wake a parallel revival of persecutions and "cleansing" along religious, national, and ethnic lines?

4. What are the implications of the answers given to the first three questions, for the status of the belief or assent to be accorded to the major statements of any given religion? Major religions do differ, one from the other, in their claim upon beliefs difficult to verify—the assertion of the survival of death, for example. Can a religion properly be judged at least in part by the strain it places upon ordinary credulity?

The possible permutations of answers to these four questions are numerous! Careful readers of the book must at least implicitly construct their own table of these issues, ponder Schoenfeld's pattern of answers, assess the force of each argument, and finally clarify their own commitments in this table of issues.

In early and repeated contrasts between religion and science, the author reveals a concern for parity in their respective roles: "Science of course does not have exclusive lien on objective methods of investigation. . . . Science and religion can each look at man objectively . . ." (p. 11). Claiming that science has made religions "less naive in their pronouncements about how the material world around us functions," Schoenfeld continues to say that religions now "have a clearer view of what their proper sphere of authority is" (p. 3). (I think of the current Pope and his proclamations, in this overpopulated world, against contraception.) Let us push the question deeper: This sentence implies that there *is* a "proper sphere of authority" for religion. So before we have embarked upon an analysis of religious behavior, we are informed (might one say warned?) that this sphere does indeed exist.

Says Schoenfeld: "Modern education and modern science have in this way been helping religion to gain a new suppleness, and thereby to regain its ancient and natural strength" (p. 3). This I hadn't noticed. Convictions of Christian Science parents for withholding medical treatment from their offspring have made recent press. Here lies an important problem in this work: What religion are we talking about? The author never says, but it seems to me that religions, although they may address a common core of human problems, do indeed differ in the manner of address, and in their answers too.

The specific contribution promised by the book, given the premise that religion is most likely to endure, is that it "looks to the behavioral reasons for that endurance" (p. 5). The central thesis here adumbrated is: "In a word, religion exists and persists amongst men, and in each man, because of the happenings and encounters of everyday living" (p. 8). I take this to mean not merely that the adults of the world may teach a child the beliefs of a culture, telling stories, singing songs, and reading sacred texts, as the "tradition" argument has it. Apart from this, we must consider how the very socialization of the child, thanks to the uniquely human long period of dependency upon others and the nurturance that assures survival through the course of that dependency, can engender religious tendencies. Called by Freud the period of "magical omnipotence," and seen by Skinner as the cradle of the "magical mand," we wonder how this theme will fare in the account that Schoenfeld offers.

In the behavioral analysis we encounter in this book, some of it brilliant, I find a preponderant emphasis upon the more cognitive issues of human growth, with less recognition of the motivational aspects of the struggle to survive and to attain closeness to others. For example, in introducing the concept of operant behavior, control by consequences is described as "reward, approval and disapproval used by parents or co-religionists" (p. 12). This phraseology might pertain to the manner in which a child recites his or her prayers. But what is the terminology for being fed when hungry, warmed when cold, and comforted when fretting or in pain? A baby swept up in warm and loving arms may be not quite aware of whether those are the arms of a "co-religionist," and yet be powerfully affected by a fundamental sense of whether this strange world is to be trusted.

Regarding belief in a God, Schoenfeld says,

> The concern of the behavior scientist is with man's side of the dialogue which he reports he is having with God. This is no offense to religion. He who is personally religious will know that the living God is listening, though when He answers not everyone will hear His voice. (p. 23)

The author sees the behavioral base of belief as arising in a social and verbal context, in which a kind of Piagetian reification takes place, incorporating generalizations at increasingly higher levels of abstraction. The period of childhood dependency helps to fashion the concepts of God, eternity, and immortality, with the final result that "The attributes of the personified God are those of an idealized person, or as far as human thought can reach" (p. 44). In this process, says Schoenfeld, humans generalize adjectival properties to their extreme values: We know some strong and wise people and admire them, so we say that God is infinitely strong and wise.

On the resulting tendency towards anthropomorphism, Schoenfeld says, "Teachers of Judaism or Islam or Christianity may warn us against anthropomorphism when we speak of God, but the sentences of their warning contain it" (p. 50). Thus,

> Religion and science agree that an individual's experience underlie his concepts both of his person freedom, and of his God. It is important to record that agreement. Behavior science may not wish, or may not be able, to say more than that. Religion does not hesitate to speak on. (p. 43)

I watch with uneasy feelings the shift from "It is widespread," to "It is inevitable," and from there to "It is good." With the way thus cleared for big statements, Schoenfeld asserts, "It does seem historically true that the codes of morality and justice that have come to us from religion have squared better with the needs of man's social life than have those of any secular philosophy he has yet invented" (p. 54). This claim is important, and is made several times in the course of the book. The detailed unfolding of the debate around this claim is central to a final evaluation not only of Schoenfeld's book but of the debates of our time.

Sections on God in history and revelation transmit the flavor of a super-personal Director with the world as His Stage. I find the alternative visions—that history is a play with no director—not quite so unbelievable as Schoenfeld does; he seems to suppose it impossible to allow "chaos" into history. (Here, as elsewhere in the book, it is not easy to distinguish a description of the beliefs of others from the belief of the author himself. Can one explain why a belief is compelling to others, without the result that the explainer is himself compelled?)

The first answer to the thrice-asked question, "Is there a God?" includes the claim that even in the act of denying, a serious nonbeliever thus offers evidence of positive belief! I am here reminded of an aunt who often informed me that I did after all believe in God (when I had just denied this). I was annoyed at my aunt, and am surprised to find the same argument here. Schoenfeld concludes, "So it is that, while they are busy at it, God is presiding over their quarrel" (p. 69). To St. Anselm's ontological argument that the very conception of God contains its own attribute of perfection and there-

fore existence, we here witness the emergence of a modern, more dialectical variant: The very argument about whether God exists is proof that He does! The proof might go like this: In an argument of so many twists and turns, "God only knows" whether we are an even or odd point in the debate. And if God knows, He must exist! Q.E.D.

The strategy of the chapter on "Miracles and Science" is to emphasize that science studies "only" the physical properties of things. This seems harmless enough, but soon it emerges that this modest limitation acts to cut science out of entire realms of knowledge, which consist of the undefined nonphysical complement. Scientific reliance upon repeatable experiments is presented as the best that science can do, but is limited in its scope because (citing Hume) no deeper meaning can be assigned to "cause and effect" than constant and regular conjunction. But whereas Hume sees this fact as the underpinning of how we know what we do know, Schoenfeld takes the fundamentally essentialist position that the knowledge derived in this experiential manner can be at best but a "faint copy" of the truth we yearn for.

> The confusions and debates begin when people generalize from science (as they are so prone to do in our science-oriented age) and declare that what science can do is *all* that can be done. Religion does disagree with that . . . for a number of reasons. One of them is that there is no evidence that the generalization is warranted—certainly no evidence of the sort that science, which prides itself on its objectivity, insists on its own affairs. For its part, religion declares, if it chooses to define an angel as pure spirit, a subsisting being whose proper existence is apart from matter, science has nothing to say about it, literally *nothing,* because such propositions and terms are outside its cognizance. . . . Whatever man's method may be for learning something of the supernatural world, science can study nature itself only by natural methods. (pp. 73–74)

The direction of this argument quickly appears: to permit room for assertions to be made, without grounds for criticism from science, about the nature and possibility of miracles. Schoenfeld stops just short of claiming that miracles do in fact occur. Instead, he says

> The fact is that such sentences and questions are constructible, and what is constructible some one will construct. . . . The fact that such questions are frameable, and that they can be responded to in non-scientific terms, means that science is not, nor ever will be, the sole source of "explanations" that *all* people desire for the world and the fullness thereof. (p. 77–78)

In this central argument, an analysis of the conditions of scientific knowing is conducted, and its limits are used to suggest that by default there must be other forms of knowing. Next we are asked to consider the fact that propositions are uttered that assert knowledge of this other kind. Yet the reason for such assertions is curious: The syntax of the language permits them. It is as if those monkeys turned loose upon typewriters, knowing only the syntactical rules studied by Chomsky, could be counted upon to produce the great assertions of religious vision! There is no discussion of their truth status, or of their dynamics as "distortions of the tact relationship." We are told only this: "Other ways of talking, seeing, and thinking are inevitable, and some say desirable. They include the religious one" (p. 78).

In passages such as these, close reading is required to sort out the behavior analysis, the logic, and the rhetoric; and to discern whether we are being invited into new realms of truth, whether human limitations are being identified, or whether we are seeing a sad shrug of ironic wisdom. The very limitations prudently put upon ourselves when we act as scientists seem, in Schoenfeld's eyes, to "actually act to strengthen religious faith" (p. 79). Where the mathematician Kronecker says, "God made the integers; the rest is the work of man," Schoenfeld seems to say, "Man experiences integers; to posit a continuum is a leap toward God." He builds to an epiphany: "The infinity of positive knowledge defeats men, but it does not defeat God. He can contain it all" (p. 80).

Finally, though, we remain uncertain of the status of this utterance. Is Schoenfeld characterizing what people come to feel as a result of their attempts to comprehend experience, or is he asserting a conclusion that he himself has drawn from studying the matter? Or is he—a

third possibility—relinquishing his identity as a scientist apart and becoming one with those he is studying? We are suspended in a haunting moment.

Almost immediately after this haunting moment, we come upon a jolting passage, at once startling and obscure. It comes after 80 pages of unrelieved use of "he," "him," and "his," to say nothing of "He," "Him," and "His," with no indication that organisms (human or other) of female gender exist. The author is discussing reactions to the limitations of knowledge derived from empirical investigation and reason. Suddenly:

> Some thinkers remain defiant despite all arguments proving the imperfection of man's knowledge and his limitless ignorance. Admitting all, they believe that there is no other hope for human knowledge other than reason and science. They feel that to succumb to religion, with its faiths and dogmas, is only to marry ignorance after divorcing knowledge because she has a birthmark on her thigh. (p. 81)

The appearance of the feminine gender in this sentence—the only such instance in the book—may perhaps be explained as a result of the author's recourse to the metaphor of marriage and divorce. If one who can choose to divorce and then to remarry must be male, then perforce the "object" of these actions must be a woman. (The dimension of "the known, including the unknown" as feminine, one might say.) The bizarre flavor of the birthmark on the thigh remains unpurged by any other encounter with the feminine principle, even in its now-archaic form as helpmeet: "He for God alone, she for God in Him." We must conclude that Schoenfeld does not share Faust's vision that "Das ewige Weibliche ziet uns hinan!"

Chapter 6 concludes with a version of the famous "argument from design." Many versions exist of the argument from first cause, or the sense of order, from Aristotle's unmoved mover to Augustine's cry that the heavens and the earth proclaim their own existence, and that they were created. For Aquinas (a hero in Schoenfeld's pages, along with Maimonides), there are no less than five versions of this "a posteriori" proof.

For Berkeley, it is "the surprising magnificence, beauty, and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of the creation, together with the exact harmony and correspondence of the whole." (1713/1988, p. 159). For Schoenfeld, the fact that experiments *can* be repeated, that forms of symbiosis *are* seen among living things—these observations are seen as evidence for something like a "Designer who cares." Perhaps it must be admitted that we are in some kind of "special" place in nature, or else we would not be here! It could be argued, however, that stable systems, once they have even the smallest start, immediately have a superior chance at survival. There may well be chaotic realms in the universe in which there is no symbiosis, no self-perpetuating species, perhaps not even any repeatable experiments. We might regard ourselves as "lucky" not to be in any such place (although at times it seems to me that we are dangerously close to this condition). If we were indeed in the center of chaos, we wouldn't notice order, wonder about anything, or indeed exist. In that sense we may indeed be lucky—for the moment—but still, is gratitude in order? And where should it be directed?

In dealing with death and immortality, Schoenfeld points out that religious concern regarding death may include doctrines about the departed, but their behavioral effects may be felt among the living. We bury the dead in a state that preserves them until the day of resurrection, but it is the living—despite the words of Jesus—who bury the dead. (And in fact it was the quasi-religion of theosophy, in an act of rebellion against Christian practice in America, that introduced ceremonies of cremation late in the 19th century.)

> The interim between death and disposal, while the body is still before us, is filled with powerful behavioral forces. These forces stem from the discrimination and generalization of stimuli coming to us from several sources: from the body itself, from the living persons around us, and from ourselves. (p. 95)

This analysis has interesting ramifications. A friend of mine who has become a functionary in one line of Buddhism

tells me that the period of rigor mortis is interpreted as the struggle of the soul in its attempt to remain on the earthly plane, and that the assistance of the surviving community during this period of struggle is provided by chanting, in the presence of the corpse, appropriate verses from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* which helps guide the soul safely on its way. After a sufficient measure of this ritual, success is indicated when indeed the body finally relaxes.

At points such as this, I wished for greater contact with anthropological studies of the fear of corpses and ghosts in various cultures, and practices in which the garb of mourning seems to function to disguise the survivors and protect them from reprisal from the dead. A wealth of such information has been gathered since Freud's analysis in *Totem and Tabu,* and a modern synthesis would offer a fine challenge to sophisticated behavior analysis.

The behavioral grounds for some degree of belief in immortality, as sketched out by Schoenfeld, are heavily "cognitive": We observe that we awake from sleep, and generalize therefrom. But where, in this list of reasons, is the sheer *wish to survive*? The service of religion in its attempts to "remove death's sting" is acknowledged, but a more detailed analysis might take up the variations: Does a belief in reincarnation help to meliorate the obvious inequalities in human fortune we see around us, by lengthening the time-span and venue of the life's drama from one to many? Did a high death rate among children in the 19th century sustain the Spiritualists' belief that they will be reunited with their loved ones in the afterlife? How do Christian Scientists in fact dispose of bodies, in a religion that so deeply denies the reality of death that its ministers perform no funeral services?

In noting the omission of details I would like to see explored, we come to a good moment to observe that Schoenfeld's book serves to prompt and motivate just such queries. As a course textbook, it could readily serve as a main highway from which numberless student reports, reminiscences, case studies, debates, projects, and research papers could branch into rich territory. Among many such topics, here is a major one: Can the virtues of a religion be obtained without reliance upon beliefs (such as the survival of death) that are difficult to take seriously in a scientific age? As late as Kant, we find a major philosopher holding that immortality is a practical postulate, an indispensable condition of the moral life. And yet, as early as Lucretius, we find a thinker who regarded immortality as an immoral and troubling doctrine. Is there—can there be—a last word on this subject?

At the end of Chapter 4, a section on "Operant Dying" offers an excellent analysis of martyrdom: its settings, its possible motivations, its pathologies, and the muted degree of admiration accorded martyrs among most peoples. This is one of the intensely beautiful passages in the book.

A similar tension between the behavior analysis of religious doctrines, and their defense as inevitable, functional, and therefore in some sense valid, is raised in Chapter 5 on "Sin and Evil." Schoenfeld's theoretical and research contributions to the field of aversively controlled behavior—escape, anxiety, avoidance, and conditioned suppression—are extensive and deep, and the analyses here of sin, guilt, temptation, atonement, penance, and the sense of ethical freedom are brilliant. Far from proclaiming that an ethical society can be attained by the sole use of positive reinforcements, Schoenfeld seems to regard as inevitable at least some aversive practices in moral training. The important question of *how much* is not answered. He claims that both religion and secular morals are trying to do their best, both for the social good and for the individuals they condition, and argues that given the tasks laid upon them, they try to minimize the suffering of the individual subject to discipline. But if one would argue that this is the best of all possible worlds, we need to be clear about which world we are talking about. The one in which adulterers are killed in the public square? In which "uppity Niggers" are lynched? Are we de-

fending a Mormon church that excommunicates homosexuals, or one in which (more recently) that is no longer the automatic action?

It is far from obvious that aversive controls can be entirely eliminated in the social order. But we approach, these days, dilemmas about not only the desirable techniques of behavioral control but also the norms in whose service those techniques should be applied. Variety and change in social norms—the key fact of modernity—render it hard to believe, as Schoenfeld seems to suggest, that the suffering in the world is well calibrated, and that its incidence and prevalence are approximately what is needed to maintain order. How can that be, when such inconsistency is the order of the day? Schoenfeld says, "Most effective of all, in religion's eyes, but also most difficult, is to teach a man to understand and to accept his suffering. When a man can do that, religion says, his suffering is his teacher, and he will be the better for the pain" (p. 121). I find it startling to read this view when 100 years have passed since Friedrich Nietzsche wrote *The Genealogy of Morals* and *Beyond Good and Evil.*

The critical question remains. In the author's words, "Man has never found a substitute more understandable, and therefore more acceptable, to him. Religion says he never did, and never will, because there is none" (p. 131). The reason is functional: "Religion makes its contribution to social stability through its moral codes" (p. 133). And the challenge:

> Whether any code of morals can long survive with less direction, or whether it can effective guide behavior without God as its authority, is perhaps not possible to say thus far on wholly behavioral grounds. Yet our own age, perhaps more than any before it, faces that question as a crisis. (p. 134)

The crisis is well stated. The solution awaits.

The chapter on prayer announces that "It is as verbal behavior that a scientist must understand prayer" (p. 135). But despite the behavioristic framework (or is it part of it?), "The conversation may have only one speaker, but he who prays has no doubt that there is a Hearer" (p. 137). I wonder: Is it not a typical experience of our time that at least some do pray in the absence of faith that the prayer is heard? Again, empirical data might have some bearing. To any who might gather such data, I will say that that has been my experience.

When Schoenfeld claims that confessions are really tacts instead of mands, here too I wonder: "I have sinned" may sound quite like a tact, but is not the complete utterance really "Father forgive me, for I have sinned?" Even more difficult to classify is the "prayer of adoration of God which is made without thought of personal profit." Can we not suppose that a declaration acknowledging the power of the Other will—it may be hoped—lead the Other to spare the declarer the worst of the possible punishments for recent actions? Many indeed are the forms of the concealed mand, disguising themselves as tacts.

In examining belief and heresy, Schoenfeld reasserts his own belief that religion is no culprit in any conflict with science: "Whatever the place of man in this world as science discovers it, and whatever the facts of his behavior might be, religion wants to know them" (p. 164). This has simply not been my experience, at least with respect to dominant forms of Christianity. If Schoenfeld argues that I have not encountered "religion" as he means it, I reply that he in turn is not referring to religion as I know it. Another possible empirical study: Can religions be ranked for the degree to which they make claims that strain scientific credulity? I confess to strong beliefs as to the outcome of such a study!

As the book nears its end, perspectives shift from individual analysis, and a feeling for social processes and historical drama emerges. We encounter illuminating discussions of problems of conversion (gradual or sudden), and the phenomena of backsliding, lapse, apostasy, and heresy. A sweeping panoramic view takes form, describing how "the heretic of one religion may become the prophet of another" (p. 175), and of the dramas of reform, revolution, schism, and the

emergence, suppression, and reemergence of old heresies as new truths.

In this wide view, the statement reasserts itself that "no human society has ever been a religious vacuum . . . religious behavior is inevitable among men" (p. 183). But by this point, I, for one, was less interested in the sweeping debate than in the hope for a system (call it religious or not) that is more free of lies, nonsense, sanctimonious hypocrisy, and punishment for small deviancies than most we now know as religious. The evils lampooned by the genius of Molière have not vanished from the Earth! If we search for a possible source of alternative values, Schoenfeld asserts that there is none: that it is already "a religion" to have values that behavior science itself cannot dictate. This view contrasts starkly with that of B. F. Skinner, namely, that the very survival of the group espousing a given set of values is the final criterion.

To this opposition, I think a third view can be stated, one that is looser and less definitive, but not trivial: Admit that behavior science is not per se a source of values, but also claim that there are better criteria than mere survival. Groups can survive in a wide variety of environments, including those that have within them sparse joys, minimal reinforcements, little beyond baseline existence, much suffering, pathological group processes, high suicide rates, few lovely things, and poor achievement in arts and sciences. We all know this, and we all to some extent live under the shadow of these dark truths.

Schoenfeld, in wanting to be on the side of the angels, joins very human company. His final points remind us of the power of immediate reinforcements, their effects not always the happiest as the moment passes. The "seven deadly sins" are based on needs not easy to tame. But still, it should be possible to formulate minimal criteria of the lessening of suffering, the achievement of basic securities, a good mix of challenges and protections in the social and ethical order. It seemed possible to Aristotle, who, free from entrapment in either wing of the "Judaeo-Christian tradition," believed immortality to be unlikely, and an ethical life nonetheless to be within reach in a single lifetime. As an alternative example, Bobby Newman's *The Reluctant Alliance: Behaviorism and Humanism* (1992), recently reviewed in these pages, attempts to formulate a partnership between behaviorism and humanism (also often considered antithetical) in the attempt to make a coherent system, with values and science-based knowledge working hand in hand.

In our age, we see much of a watered-down religion, in which nothing is taken quite literally, and we are urged to settle instead for beautiful symbolism. As each doctrine weakens, its distinctive qualities disappear, and we are left with a flaccid ecumenism. At least we can forgive each other all the atrocities we have, as members of fiercely believing groups, inflicted upon each other. But once the rituals of forgiveness are over, what then? Can a tepid sanctionless world religion exercise the needed controls upon selfishness, short-run hedonism, greed, and rapacity? How much hope lies in a kind of United Nations of the church, temple, and mosque? The old religions at least knew clearly what the sins were, and how serious. And some stood fiercely against the invasion of human solicitude on the part of an intrusive and total state. Can a secular world contain those sins? This may be the last great question in the regulation of human society.

Schoenfeld's book interweaves three levels of discussion and argument. The first is to show that religion arises out of the contingencies of human life, and is not something to be cleansed away by cutting off received doctrine. On a second level is the analysis of the functions of religious belief and practice, both for individual behavior and for social function. Many segments are offered of behavioral analysis of the contingencies in our lives that foster and sustain religious attitudes. He also reviews the social functions of religion, at moments in broad scope, as when he contrasts the scenarios of a personal God in dramas of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the alternative vision of an illusory world in which

salvation is found by acknowledgment of its impersonality and is maintained by practices such as meditation.

But at the third level, the "reductive" or secular tone of the first two levels is negated, mellowed, or transcended (depending, perhaps, upon your own point of view), by giving the truths of religion a status coequal with that of the truths of science. It is as if the author were saying, "To the study of science and human behavior I would now add the study of religion and human behavior." Some of the techniques for this step are familiar and a bit shopworn: The totality of reality is bifurcated into the physical and an unspecified remainder, and science finds itself trapped by its own virtues (insisting upon verifiability) into the corner of the physical; what began as a virtue to be applauded ends up as a restriction. (If it is really true that all we can know can be known only by our senses, what then is the source of the understanding that that knowledge is so pitiable and meager?) The problems are serious, and religions are not trivial. These things we must fully admit. But that does not force the conclusion that the discussion is finished.

The book is a sustained meditation. I have attacked the arguments at points that seemed to me worthy of critical attention, but there is no gainsaying the book's intensity or its continuity. It is an *experience* to read it, to ponder and reflect, and to watch the conversations set off among one's own repertoire of beliefs, attitudes, hopes, and fears.

Said W. B. Yeats: "Out of our quarrel with others we make rhetoric; out of our quarrel with ourselves, we make poetry." In addition to the valuable essays on behavior analysis of religion in this book, there is indeed a share of rhetoric that may put the reader on edge here and there; but special rewards lie in the stretches of thought, meditation, and unguarded beautifully phrased musing, which amount to poetry.

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